

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
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R 280625Z MAR 78
FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5908
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 0659

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR, IZ
SUBJECT: DEATH OF PRESIDENT BAKR'S SON

1. IRAQI GOVERNMENT DECLARED THREE DAYS OF MOURNING FOLLOWING THE DEATH IN AN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT OF PRESIDENT BAKR'S SON MOHAMMAD ON MARCH 25. PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS, CONFIRMED BY USUALLY RELIABLE IRAQI SOURCES, INDICATE THAT DEATH OCCURRED IN AN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT WHICH ALSO CLAIMED THE WIFE AND A SISTER-IN-LAW OF MOHAMMAD. TWO OTHER SISTERS-IN-LAW WHO WERE IN THE VEHICLE, WHICH COLLIDED WITH A TRUCK ON THE ROAD NORTH OF BAGHDAD, WERE SERIOUSLY INJURED. THE FOUR WOMEN WERE THE DAUGHTERS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE STATE ORGANIZATION FOR CIVIL AVIATION.

2. MOHAMMAD WAS BELIEVED TO BE 23 YEARS OLD AND HAS CURRENTLY BEEN EMPLOYED AS PRESS SECRETARY TO HIS FATHER. IN THAT POSITION HE HELD A MILITARY COMMISSION BUT HAD NO PARTICULAR DUTIES IN THE ARMY. MOHAMMAD WAS GENERALLY
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THOUGHT TO BE A PIOUS AND DUTIFUL IF NOT VERY BRIGHT YOUNG MAN.

3. INEVITABLY, THERE WILL BE RUMORS THAT MOHAMMAD WAS THE VICTIM OF FOUL PLAY. THIS IS ESPECIALLY SO SINCE HIS DEATH FOLLOWS THE DEATH A MONTH AGO IN A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT OF ONE OF PRESIDENT BAKR'S SONS-IN-LAW.

IN THE LATTER CASE, THE ACCIDENT OCCURED WHILE THE SON-IN-LAW WAS DRUNK AND RETURNING IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS FROM A GAMBLING PARTY. ON THAT OCCASION THERE WAS NO PUBLIC MOURNING, WHEREAS MOHAMMAD'S FUNERAL HAS BEEN A FULL DRESS OCCASION.

4. PRESIDENT BAKR APPEARED DEEPLY MOVED BY THE DEATH OF MOHAMMAD, AND SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THE TRAGEDY HAS HAD AN EFFECT ON BAKR'S OWN SHAKY HEALTH. BAKR CAN TAKE SMALL CONSOLATION IN HIS SURVIVING ELDEST SON HAITHAM, WHO HAS A SERIOUS NERVOUS DISORDER AND DOES NOT ENJOY A GOOD REPUTATION FOR PERSONAL MORALITY.
MACK

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